

Appendix A: Definition of Obesity and Overweight

Body mass index (BMI) is widely used to determine obesity and overweight because it is inexpensive, reproducible, and convenient. It is a reasonable approximation of the amount of body fat for most adults and has thus come to be the standard for assessing obesity, both in the US and internationally. BMI is falsely high in individuals with a great deal of muscle mass (such as bodybuilders), and falsely low in those that have lost muscle mass, such as the elderly.

Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated as follows:

English System:

$$\text{BMI} = \left(\frac{\text{weight(pounds)}}{\text{height(inches)} \times \text{height(inches)}} \right) \times 703$$

Metric System:

$$\text{BMI} = \left(\frac{\text{weight(kilograms)}}{\text{height(meters)} \times \text{height(meters)}} \right)$$

Adults

For adults, an ideal body weight is defined as a BMI 18.5 to 24.9, overweight is

defined as 25.0 to 29.9, and obese is defined as greater than or equal to 30. Overweight and obesity for adults are classified as above, without regard to gender or age.

Children and Adolescents

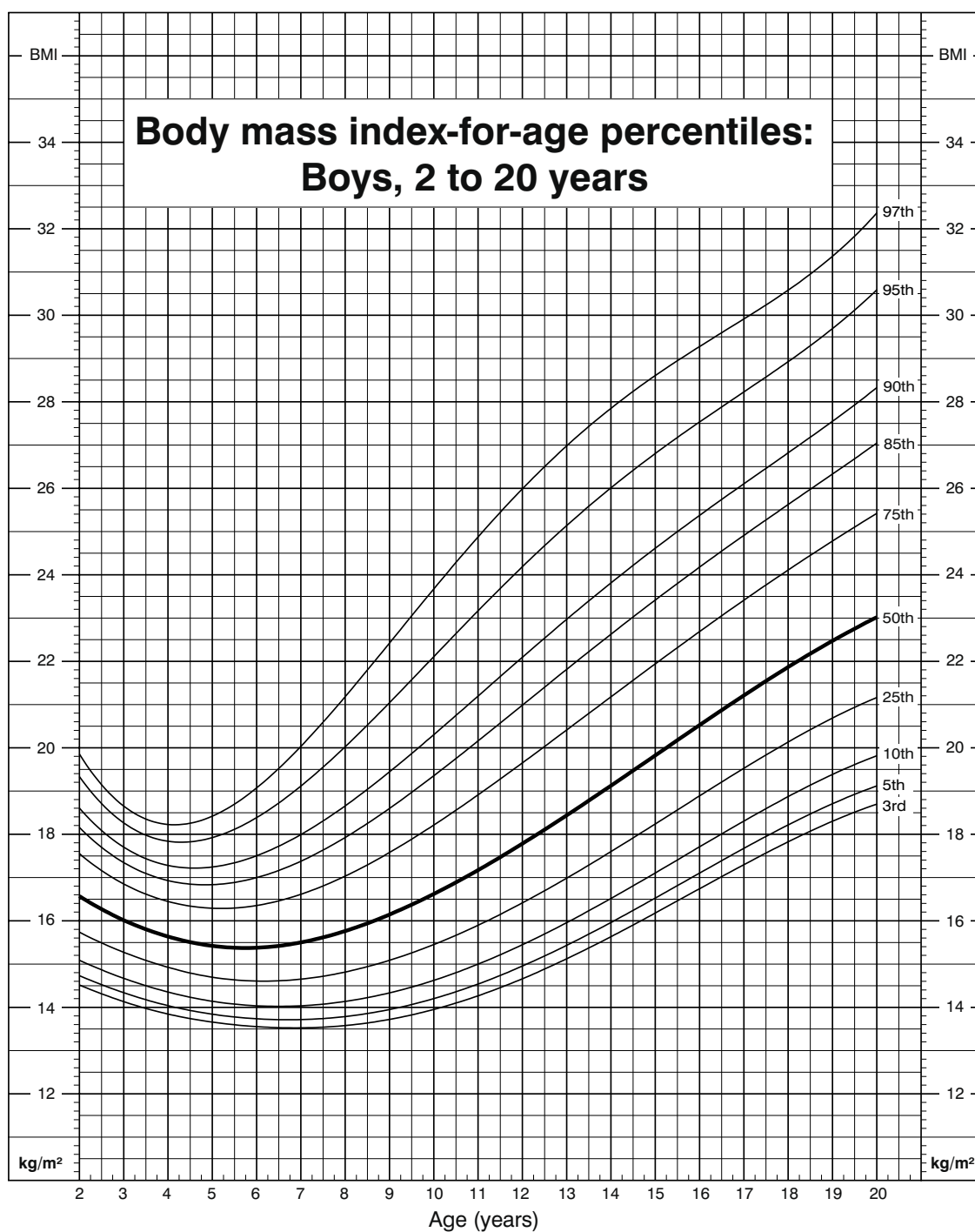
For children, BMI is gender specific and age specific. Because BMI changes substantially as children get older, BMI for age is the measure used for children ages 2 to 20 years.

“Overweight”, or obesity, for children is defined as greater than or equal to the 95th percentile for BMI by age and sex based on CDC Growth Charts. “At risk of becoming overweight” is defined as greater than or equal to the 85th percentile but less than the 95th percentile for BMI by age and sex based on CDC Growth Charts.

CDC Growth Charts

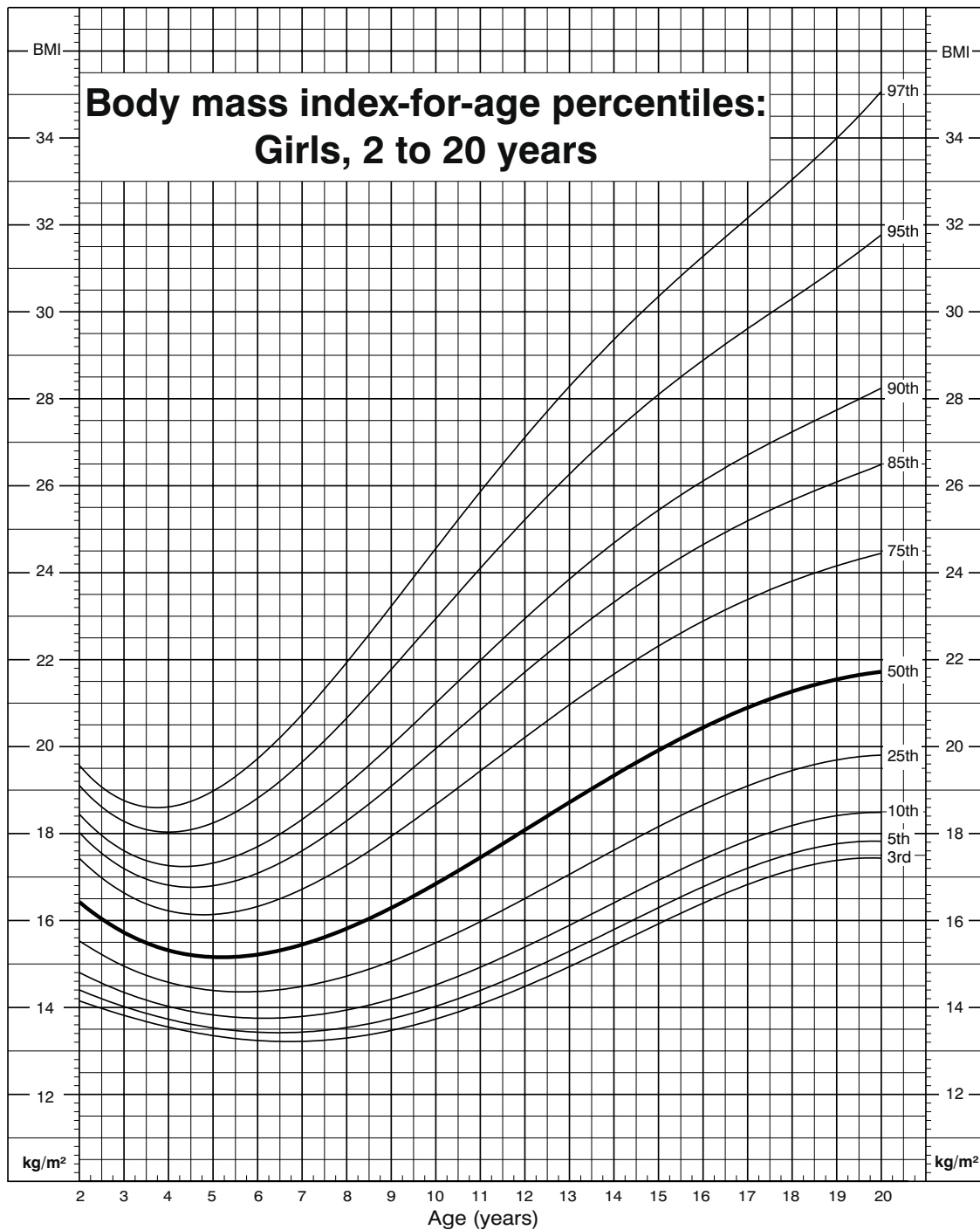
BMI-for-age percentiles for boys 2 to 20 years and BMI-for-age percentiles for girls 2 to 20 years are found on pages 48 and 49.

Source: Tools for Calculating Body Mass Index (BMI). Nutrition & Physical Activity. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved on June 28, 2005, from http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dbpa/growthcharts/bmi_tools.htm



SOURCE: Developed by the National Center for Health Statistics in collaboration with the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2000).





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